

Contacts (continued)

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LIBRARY CORNER

QLABEL has been updated to version 1.02, with thanks to Gordon Wright and Richard Alexander for coming up with suggested improvements - I have not had time to attend to them all, but two important ones have been added already. The new version allows labels to be sorted alphabetically by label name, although this is probably only useful if you use the surname first with files of address labels. The other new option is a preview of labels - i.e. a representation of how they will appear when printed. This covers all the character sizes, bold, underlined and italic print, but not proportional printing. See the screen-dump below for an example of how this looks. The new version will be available from the library after January's meeting.

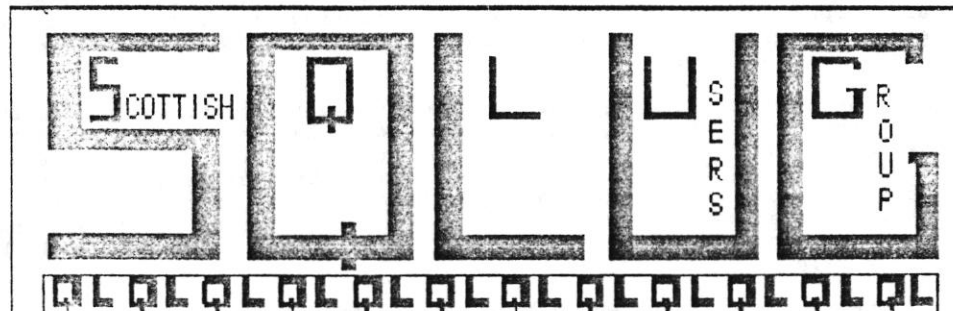
QLABEL allows condensed characters to be used in labels
As well as big ones
Italics are no problem either

AND UNDERLINING HELPS MAKE A POINT

Why not give it a try?
Why not give it a try?
Why not give it a try?
Why not give it a try?

To order disks from the library, please send the appropriate number of formatted disks, plus adequate return postage, to Iain Robertson, 71 Oxbgangs Terrace, Edinburgh, EH13 9BZ. Please remember to state the reference numbers of the disks required. Unfortunately, on DS/DD 3.5" disks (the standard QL format) can be dealt with just now.

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SQLUG NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 41, JANUARY 1993

A happy new year to all SQLUG members and everyone who is still interested in the progress of the QL. The year ahead promises to keep the advances coming, judging by reports of the shape of things to come in the December issue of *Sinclair QL World*. Miracle Systems apparently intend to produce their graphics upgrade as part of an integrated boxed system, into which you will slot your existing QL components. This will presumably result in a system resembling a standard desktop computer in looks, but with the heart of a QL. No hard details are available as yet, but it will hopefully make its appearance sometime this year.

LAST MEETING: COWANE CENTRE, STIRLING; SUNDAY 13th DECEMBER

About 15 people showed up at one time or another during the day, for our pre-Christmas meeting. As usual on these occasions, we held our annual shoot-'em-up competition, although not everyone was around when it got underway at about 2pm.

The game we played was called *Firebirds*, published by Jochen Merz. It is a straightforward blasting game, where hordes of aliens descend upon your ship from above. Anyone who spent much time in pubs or arcades during the early eighties will recognise the similarity to *Galaxians*, a very popular arcade game of that period. The disk was donated by Alan Wilson and offered as one of the prizes.

Since *Firebirds* has a two-player option, we made use of this in organising the event as a knockout competition, with a computerised drawing of lots. After the first round, the six winners and two highest-scoring losers went on to the next round. This round saw the highest score of the competition (2260), clocked up by yours' truly. However, in the semi-final, I was soundly thrashed by Andrew Johnson. In the other semi-final, Jim Patterson narrowly beat Scott Telford with a score of 1590 to 1420.

Big match nerves must surely have contributed to the low-scoring final, in which Jim's 840 points gave victory over Andrew's 450. Jim chose a fine assortment of festive confectionery (selection box) as his prize, and Andrew took home the *Firebirds* disk. Congratulations to the winners and thanks to everyone who took part.

Meanwhile, the usual business of SQLUG meetings was carrying on as normal. I would like to thank Scott and Andrew for helping me with my newly-acquired copy of *QPAC2*. There are so many features and ways of doing things with *QPAC2* that I wasn't sure what to include in my "BOOT"

file. Scott's own QPAC2 boot formed the basis for creating mine, and I was helped through the process of reconfiguring the program to suit my needs - such as changing the colour scheme to be more readable on my amber-screen monitor.

There was a good deal of interest shown in printing labels, but not from the SQLUGware QLABEL program. John Shaw was demonstrating the use of his own Archive program for that purpose, whilst Ken Crombie was working his way through the process required by Flashback for printing labels. If you would like to start using QLABEL, but have files of labels created using other programs, I might be able to convert them into the correct format. Please contact me if you think this would be of any help.

Ken Crombie informed me that he had finally received an upgraded version of Vision Mixer from Dilwyn Jones, which is compatible with Gold Card. Dilwyn is well-known to be working under severe time constraints at the moment, so anything other than straightforward orders will inevitably involve some delay. I have obtained the information on updates of his software catalogue, so you might find it more convenient to give me a ring for that sort of information.

Ronald Bezzant brought along a bare 3.5" DSDD drive which he bought at a recent All Formats show, but which was giving problems. Unfortunately, he was wrongly led to believe that the drive required a 12V + 5V power supply, when it was really one of the more modern drives, needing only 5V. A considerable degree of overheating occurred when the inappropriate voltage was applied, which may have caused some damage. When we tested the drive at the meeting though, it gave the appearance of almost working - the drive light went on and off at the correct time and the disk did spin round. There was however, no sound from the read/write head (which would normally clunk backwards and forwards), and the QL reported "not found". Perhaps there was still some rearrangement of jumper leads required, but this does seem a job for an expert disk driver.

John Sadler reported on the progress of his SuperBASIC analyser program, mentioned last month. He has discovered that one of his problems was caused by trying to INPUT strings which were too large for the keyboard buffer. The answer would be to find some way of expanding the buffer, or else to read the information using a series of INKEY\$ rather than INPUT.

Gerry Taylor had his QL set up for most of the meeting to do some interesting calculations. He had written a SuperBASIC program to work out the periods when Venus would have been readily observable from ancient Babylon. The reason for this rather unusual investigation (with apologies to Gerry if I picked it up wrongly) was to find the most likely date for some detailed observations of Venus discovered in old Babylonian documents. Pinpointing the correct date would allow the alignment of the calendar used by those ancient astronomers and our "modern" Gregorian calendar.

The program was set up to calculate likely dates and store them in a file on ramdisk. Since it involved a great deal of calculation, it was going to take an hour or more, so Gerry left it working and went off elsewhere. When he came back, he discovered that his QL had crashed just when it was coming to the most promising time period.

The problem was traced to a missing "END IF", which probably caused SuperBASIC to eat up more and more stack memory as it went, until it finally froze. Gerry's program was then QLiberated to speed it up, and was set to work again - this time saving the data to disk, in

case of another crash. Despite this precaution, a mains spike crashed Gerry's computer just as it was coming to the end of its calculations, leaving the file unreadable by QDOS. Thankfully, the data was saved to a newly-formatted disk, so it should not have been difficult to unscramble using a sector editor. I hope Gerry gets the answer he wants in the end!

Finally, I have to mention the problems with Watford Electronics related to me by Robert Thomson at the meeting. Judging by the treatment Robert has received at the hands of this company, SQLUG members can be advised to steer well clear of them.

The problems started when a Star printer that Robert had bought from Watford Electronics developed a fault - one of the 24 pins seized up, causing banding on all printouts. Robert duly returned the printer for repair or replacement.

When the printer was returned to him, Robert opened the box to find it badly damaged - which came as a surprise, since there was not a mark on the packaging. Watford blamed the carriers and stated that the insurers would pay for a new printer. After a period of inaction, they changed their minds and said that the printer could be repaired after all. However, after many months of prompting, Robert has been unable to get the supplier to return him a working printer. Robert seems resigned to the fact that he will never see his printer again, but he is going to make sure that as many people as possible are warned of the shabby treatment Watford Electronics gives its customers. So beware!

NEXT MEETING: COWANE CENTRE, STIRLING, SUNDAY 17th JANUARY; 11am-5pm

Here is a good place to mention some other up-coming dates for your diary:-

Sunday 14th February - SQLUG meeting, Cowane Centre

Sunday 21st February - All Formats Computer Fair, Glasgow

Saturday 27th February - International QL Meeting, Eindhoven

I have been sent details of the international event, which is being organised jointly by SIN_QL_AIR (the National Dutch QL-Users club) and the German QL-User club, SQLUC. If a group of you are interested in a short break in Holland, please ask me for the info.

FOR SALE : MICRODRIVE CARTRIDGES

Gerry Taylor has a stock of about 100 surplus used microdrive cartridges for sale at 75p each. Contact Gerry on 031 667 5278.

CONTACTS

Please let me know if you wish to be included in the CONTACTS section. Please remember to call at reasonable hours (e.g. before 10pm)!

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